

REVIEW.

Miniaturen aus Handschriften der Kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München. Herausgegeben von Dr. Georg Leidinger. Heft 2. Flämischer Kalender (Cod. lat. 23638). Riehn & Tietze. München.



THE wide range covered by the Munich Library in the section of illuminated manuscripts is aptly suggested by the two numbers that have appeared of Dr. Leidinger's admirable series. The first, which we had the pleasure of noticing a few months ago, is devoted to the so-called Gospel-book of the Emperor Otto III, a fine specimen of the interesting, if somewhat crude and barbaric, art practised in Germany during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries; and now Dr. Leidinger takes us at a bound into the sixteenth century, and introduces us to a singularly beautiful example, hitherto little known, of Flemish miniature-painting at its highest perfection as a pictorial art. So sharp a contrast implies an intention to do something in succeeding numbers towards bridging over the gap between these phases in the history of illumination, an intention for whose fulfilment all students of the subject will look forward eagerly.

The manuscript here reproduced is most probably only a fragment. It contains a Calendar, with
 16 a full-page miniature to illustrate each of the

months, and two other full-page miniatures representing the Birth of Eve and the Flood respectively. Delightful and fascinating in themselves, these pictures have an enhanced interest from their close kinship, first remarked by Père J. van den Gheyn, to the paintings of the Hennessy Hours at Brussels and the fragmentary Hours in the British Museum, recently reproduced in honour of Sir George Warner. This kinship is especially striking in the January and September pictures, which are all but identical in the London and Munich manuscripts. It is quite obvious, however, throughout, both in details of composition and in general style; and there can be little doubt that the Munich manuscript must be assigned, like the others, to the school of Simon Bening of Bruges. Indeed, the exquisite handling of landscape and trees seems to indicate the master's own hand rather than a pupil's. In the picture for May, especially, there is a delicacy, atmosphere, and perspective which could hardly be surpassed. Among the features peculiar to this book is a crane worked by means of a treadmill, and used for hoisting wine-casks (October). The miniature of the Flood is a remarkably spirited and dramatic composition; and that of the Birth of Eve is noteworthy for its charming landscape, for its quaint representation of the Creator in papal garb and tiara, and also as a late instance of the 'continuous' method so common in mediæval art, the Fall and Expulsion being depicted in the middle distance. As in the first number, the plates are excellent.

J. A. H.